



EDITORIAL

by Hal Nason

Well, another month has come and gone and it's time to get to work on BRACEBITS. I've noticed that the attendance at the last several meetings has been down. Last month only about five or six people showed up for the meeting. Most of our membership did not show up for the meeting. **THEY MISSED A SUPER MEETING!!** We had a very interesting demonstration on using a radio to transmit the data to another computer. This process sends the information exactly as it appears on the screen. It is, in other words, a method of error free transmission!! Of course, any errors on the screen will be transmitted as is, but, the important fact is that there is little to no possibility that the data being transmitted will be garbled during transmission. So, any file transferred using this method will be received as sent.

I'm wondering where everybody was last month. My guess is that a lot of you had spring fever, since it was the first beautiful day in a very long time. Hopefully, everybody does know how to get to our new meeting site and just had other things to do. If you are having any difficulty finding our new site, please call Dan, Phil, Norma, or me and we'll be glad to assist you in finding the correct place. Again I'd like to repeat that the parking lot behind the medical center is not restricted at night and there usually is plenty of parking space available reasonably close to the entrance to the Med Center. It really is a much more convenient site than either the Northside Branch of the library or the Chemistry-Physics Building. Hope to see you there this time around. Who knows, you might even win the raffle and get to choose from an Atari 800XL Computer, P:R:CONNECTION, a 1200 baud modem (Avatex) or a monochrome monitor.

Sometimes we run an issue of BRACEBITS on a particular topic. The last several issues have been on no specific topic, so the editors decided to devote this issue to computer magazines. You will find reviews of the major Atari Specific Magazines as well as several other magazines which devote at least some space to Atari Computers. I hope that you enjoy our reviews and find them informative.

Oh, yes, last month we ran a member survey and promised to publish the results this month. Well, that will have to wait until we receive the surveys back. Right now we do not have enough completed surveys from which to make any meaningful conclusions or interpretations. Hopefully we will get them in this month and can publish the results in the June edition of BRACEBITS.

Finally, I'd like to ask for more assistance in fixing my XM301 modem. I tried the fix that we published in last month's issue; but, I am still having the same difficulty as before (the disk drive stalls and reads the disk a few bytes at a time, resulting in an unacceptable amount of time in

loading a program when the modem is connected to the system). Last month it was reported in ANALOG MAGAZINE that some XM301's had a defect that would cause this problem. They also reported that the fix was some resistors added to the modem, but they did not specify where or what type of resistors to use. So, if anybody out there knows how I can repair my modem, I'd really appreciate it if they would get in touch with me and let me in on what I need to do in order to repair my modem.

DISCLAIMER

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Any dues paying member of B.R.A.C.E. may submit an article to the editor for publication. The deadline for submissions is the first Tuesday of the month the newsletter is due out. Articles may be edited and/or published at the discretion of the editor. Articles may be mailed to Hal Nason, 258 E. High St. #9, Lexington, KY 40508 or submitted via modem to me at 606-255-5989. You will need to call me first in order to arrange a time for me to have my good ol' Atari set up for auto answer. AtariWriter is the preferable format, but any ASCII format will be acceptable.

B.R.A.C.E. meets the third Tuesday of the month at 7:00 P.M. The site of the meeting each month will be room MN 263 in the University of Kentucky Medical Center. The public is welcome to attend our meetings, but access to the library and the newsletter are limited to dues paying members of B.R.A.C.E.

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Presidential Suite
By Dan Claudy

Those of us who were able to attend last month's meeting were treated to an excellent program on PACKET RADIO given by Barry Warfield. Packet radio involves interfacing a computer to ham radio resulting in nearly error free communications over great distances. This program was so well received that we have asked (and he accepted) Barry to give it again later in this year.

Two important ideas were presented at the last meeting. One was to hold an auction during the November meeting. The other was the creation of a club owned and operated BBS since with the demise of the MISSING LINK, we are without an instrument to promote/announce the group and perform group related activities. For more on each of these see the corresponding articles.

Our current raffle culminates with the drawing during this month's meeting (MAY 19). Tickets will still be available at the beginning of the meeting. Remember, if you win, it's your choice of a P:R Connection, an 80 column monochrome monitor, an Avatex 1200 baud modem, or an Atari 800XL computer. This is truly a raffle for everyone.

With this month's mailing of BRACEBITS, we will start printing your membership expiration date. Please renew your membership on or before your expiration month. Membership is still only \$15.00/single and \$20.00 family.

Auction Proposal
by Dan Claudy

I believe everyone is familiar with an auction. Ours would be scheduled for the November meeting and would include Atari hardware and software, electronic hardware (i.e. power supplies, surge protectors, scopes), disks, chairs, tables, etc.

These items would be accumulated for two months prior to the auction. The member would list the item he/she is selling, the lowest price he/she would take, their name and phone number. They would receive a receipt. Of course, we would expect all items to be in working condition unless specifically noted.

During the auction. We could put these items up for bid and request an opening bid. The auctioneer would try for the best possible price. If the last bid does not equal or exceed the member's lowest price, then the member would be asked if the last bid would be acceptable. This will continue until the supply of items is exhausted.

These auctions are a lot of fun. Members can turn dust gathering items into CASH or acquire wanted products at favorable prices. This is also a good way for the club to

make money. as BRACE would receive a 50 cent minimum or a 10% service fee for each item sold.

Please be ready to discuss this idea at the meeting. If you can't make it call an officer, give it to a friend or write your suggestions and send it to our post office box.

Classified Ad

FOR SALE

IT'S GONE!! (the eight bit that is). I will bring to the meeting for immediate possession (if you have the cash) the following: Cardco printer interface; GE Data Recorder; Kraft Joystick; 2.0s on Rom; Microsoft and Advan Basic's; 130XE Paperclip; Your Net Worth; Utility Disk; Games (Cart, Tapes & Disks); Educational Games; Books; Bundled Antic & Analog (some with disks). Prices from \$2 to \$55. See me or call DAN 223-9528, P.S. this stuff is going fast.

B.R.A.C.E. Minutes
April 22, 1987

The opening of the meeting was a discussion on renewing your memberships for another year. A post card will be mailed as a reminder for those who have not renewed for another year. Please renew as soon as possible. The members that decide to renew later will be held to their original date of first joining. So if you joined in April of 1986 and renew in June of 1987, your renewal date will be April of 1987.

Phil Taylor gave a mail report. He received a new Atari User Group newsletter and newsletters from Pokey Press and Sail. He also mentioned that when checking out a newsletter from the library, no charge will be made toward your check out limit. If you decide to check out more than 1 newsletter, then 1 will be taken away from your check out limit from the Library.

The library report consisted of announcing some new disk submitted this past month. Submitted were a new version of Micro Check for the 130XE computers, a single density disk full of graphic demos, a Genealogy Data Base and Family Tree Organizer and a ST Demo disk.

Don't forget the raffle this coming meeting (May), anybody can buy tickets. Only \$1.00 for a ticket or 6 tickets for \$5.00. This will give you a chance to win a 800XL, P:R: Connection, a new monochrome monitor or an Avatex 1200 baud modem.

Our door prize this month was a disk holding case with 5 disk. The winner was Philip Warfield.

This month's demonstration was given by B.R.A.C.E. member Barry Warfield. We would like to thank him for the excellent demo on communications using a ham radio and his Atari computer.

ANTIC ANTICS
By Phillip G. Taylor

When I first got into Atari Computing, as many of you know who have read my other articles, I was a complete novice. I would get excited when I could get the computer to do simple things like printing HELLO to the screen over and over again. But my computing life was fairly empty until I was in County Market one day, (about two weeks after buying my computer), and found Antic magazine. I was attracted to it because it had a lot of programs I thought I would be able to type in. It was the November 84 issue and the theme was computer adventures. Well being the novice I was, I figured I could type in all those programs in a month's time. Well I got as far as typing in OmniVenture and that was it. It took 4 good hours of typing and then, like the total fool I was, I turned off the computer before I save it to my tape drive.

So much for my first attempt at computing. But I did make a new friend out of the experience. Antic magazine has been my computing companion since that time. Probably the main reason I picked Antic over Analog as my Atari companion is probably due to the way Antic handles their program listings. If you compare Antic with the other magazines you will find that Antic is the only magazine that puts all of their listings on non-glare paper. Also the listings parallel exactly to what you see on your screen.

Of course for those of you who do not want to type in programs, and who really does, a disk version is available for \$12.95, each or 99.00 for a years worth. Also you can order back issues and disks from Antic as well.

As far as quality of articles go, Antic is probably as good as Analog, and better than Atari Explorer. However, I do have a gripe about Antic being a little to Cheerleaderish about Atari. I understand they need to be pro-Atari, but sometimes they could be a stronger voice for the Atari consumer and less of a voice for Atari Company. On the positive side, Antic offers good information on new products, users groups, and new software.

The format of the magazine has gotten better lately. Amid massive complaints from its readers, Antic has changed it's cover artwork to be less "juvenile" and more "grown up". However the Antic logo itself is still written in "playful, cockeyed" lettering. The artwork on the inside of the cover is well done and the typesetting is easy to read. Frankly I find Antic's typesetting to be much easier to read than Analog's or Atari Explorer.

Probably the most impressive aspect of Antic has less to do with the magazine than with the pull out CATALOG. Antic has taken it upon themselves to salvage some of the best 8 bit software from obscurity as well as giving new 8 and 16 bit software a place to be marketed. This was probably done in an attempt to help Atarians locate good software so they

would not give up their computer and their subscription to Antic. This was a good business idea on Antic's part as well as a service to their readership. I own a piece of software they sell called CREATIVE PROCESS and have used it extensively in preparation for Law school examinations (SEE FUTURE BRACEBITS FOR A REVIEW OF THIS PIECE OF SOFTWARE).

One of my favorite regular features of Antic appears on the back page called TECH TIPS. This page is filled with neat tricks to use in your own programs. It usually has some small subroutines that do things like give you a directory, check your drive speed etc. I have found several uses for the PEEKS and POKEs given in the article.

Another excellent feature of Antic is the new products list and product reviews. I get motivated to buy more software from reading these reviews. Frankly, knowing Antic's policy of accentuating the positive, and if the product is no good, it gets no review, I won't buy a product till I see it reviewed in Antic, or see it in action myself.

For the price of \$3.50 newsstand or \$28.00 for a one year subscription, it is comparable with its competition Analog. A small price to pay for up to date information, and a lot of good hints for all Atari users. I would recommend this magazine highly for anyone who is into Atari Computing.

Compute!: A Different Mag for a Beginning Atarian
by Pat Danridge

Several months ago, a neighbor's daughter came by my place selling magazines for her school. So started my first exposure to computer magazines. With a subscription to Compute! I had hopes of learning some of the nifty things my fellow Atarians are into, such as programming and messing with the different DOS-es. At this stage in the game, I can say that I still have quite a ways to go, but Compute! gives me little tidbits now and then.

The mag provides information on public domain games (such as the Wari game) and practical programs (such as the Supereditor) which you can type in and save for use in several computer systems including our 8- and 16-bit Ataris. It has a pretty good beginner's page addressing the different users which provided info most recently on several of the different computer languages. Recently I noticed that Atarians were chided in the mag for being such indiscriminate (me, I'd say good) hackers. I wish I were so skilled, not withstanding the viewpoint of the busiaesses who supposedly lose so much money over these efforts (what about what the record industry said regarding kids taping songs from the radio?! They're still raking in the dough, and now on CDs!).

Anyway, even a novice such as myself can learn something significant from a comparative type mag like Compute! Next step up, though, may be Antic.

ANALOG REVIEW

by Hal Nason

ANALOG MAGAZINE is one of two magazines that every Atarian ought to be familiar. The other magazine is ANTIC MAGAZINE, of course, which is reviewed elsewhere in this issue of BRACEBITS. ANALOG claims to be "The #1 Magazine for Atari Computer Owners." I haven't researched actual sales figures, but have a sneaking suspicion that both ANALOG and ANTIC sell approximately the same number of issues each month.

There are many similarities between the two magazines. First of all, they both run the same advertisements each month, with the same prices. They each run issues with a theme and have covered the same themes, such as Telecommunications issues. Also they both have several type in programs each issue for both 8-bit and 16-bit Atari's. And they both get their information from about the same sources at about the same time.

However, there are some differences between the two major Atari specific magazines. Perhaps the most significant difference between the two is that ANALOG MAGAZINE is more likely to print information about problems with Atari Computers. An example of this would be ANALOG'S reporting of problems with the XM301 modem and the keyboards of the XE series computers. While ANTIC has a policy of reporting no negative news about Atari products, ANALOG DOES seem to believe that the consumer deserves to know about problems with their computers and how to repair them. I believe that ANALOG'S policy is the best one, even though Atari Corporation may not agree with them.

Another difference between the two magazines is their handling of programs (both do have disk versions which eliminates the need to type in the programs). ANALOG prints the program immediately after the article describing the program, while ANTIC prints the programs in one section at the end of the magazine. Neither method is superior to the other. But, it should be noted that ANTIC MAGAZINE does print its checksum program with each issue, while the last issue to contain the ANALOG checksum program was published six months ago. This program should be run every month for the convenience of new readers!

Both magazines use attractive graphics and have a pleasant layout, yet I prefer to look at ANTIC vs. ANALOG. For months I couldn't place the reason for this preference of mine. Then I realized that the difference was due to the paper used by ANALOG. ANALOG uses a courser paper which is not as glossy as the paper used by ANTIC. I Do not understand why ANALOG uses the cheaper paper, since the cover price of the two magazines is the same and their advertising revenue should be about the same. A change in the quality of paper might increase sales of ANALOG MAGAZINE. My conclusion is that both are excellent magazines and Atarians are lucky to have access to both.

ATARI EXPLORER REVIEW

by Hal Nason

ATARI EXPLORER is billed as "THE OFFICIAL ATARI JOURNAL." It is printed by Atari Corporation's Atari Explorer Publications Corp. It is a bi-monthly publication. They must have a small staff because it takes them the full two months to put each issue to bed, while the independent magazines manage a new issue each month.

ATARI EXPLORER is similar to the other Atari specific magazines in concept, i.e. news about Atari products, product reviews, and programs. But ATARI EXPLORER is an official publication of Atari Corp., so don't expect to find anything negative about Atari products in this publication. They do, at times, criticize software or hardware produced by third parties.

I have found several useful bits of information in the ATARI EXPLORER. One example is how to turn off the automatic cursor advance when you are using Syncalc. Also, they do have access to the most up to date information about Atari Computers, as one would expect.

ATARI EXPLORER plugs Atari products as one would expect them to do, but they do review good third party products and compare them when Atari has no product in competition with them. They did print an excellent article comparing Print Shop by Broderbund and Typesetter by Xllent Software.

ATARI EXPLORER carries far less advertising than the other Atari magazines. One can view this as either good news (it leaves more room for articles) or bad news since virtually no third party products are advertised here.

FAMILY COMPUTING REVIEW

by Hal Nason

I was one of the charter subscribers to FAMILY COMPUTING MAGAZINE, but have recently dropped my subscription because of a lack of useful information for me as an Atari Computer Owner and User. I don't feel that they give Atari the coverage that they should. They have a lot of good type in programs each month, but often, the one that you really would like to have has no Atari version. Unfortunately, part of the problem is that there is no way of printing a version for the major computers of every program in each issue due to space limitations. Sometimes a computer is eliminated from a program because the program exceeds the capabilities of the computer. However, I see no reason why this should ever be an excuse for not printing an Atari version of a program, since an Atari is capable of doing almost anything any other computer can do and more than many computers can do regardless of price.

I have used a lot of their programs and found them to be very colorful and well thought out. Be careful typing them in though (and you will have to type them, since no disk version is available) since no checksums are used.



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SHIPPING INFORMATION

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NO. 5

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGE	ARTICLE	AUTHOR
1	EDITORIAL	HAL NASON
2	PRESIDENTIAL SUITE	DAN CLAUDY
2	MINUTES	NORMA WILLIAMS
3	ANTIC ANTICS	PHIL TAYLOR
3	COMPUTE!	PAT DANRIDGE
4	ANALOG REVIEW	HAL NASON
4	ATARI EXPLORER REVIEW	HAL NASON
4	FAMILY COMPUTING REVIEW	HAL NASON

**COME TO THE NEXT MEETING OF B.R.A.C.E.
TUESDAY, MAY 19, 1987 AT 7:00 P.M.
UK MEDICAL CENTER ROOM MN 263**